

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 17, 2005

The Honorable Duncan Hunter
U.S. House of Representatives
2265 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-0552

Dear Chairman Hunter:

We are writing to express in the strongest possible terms our firm opposition to the amendment on women in the Army which was adopted by the personnel subcommittee. There was no mention during our hearings of any necessity for a change, and without exception the military and civilian experts we have consulted since the surprise introduction of this amendment have agreed that this amendment is ill-advised. Army leadership is strongly opposed to this amendment.

This amendment ties the hands of military commanders in a time of war when they are already dealing with many significant battlefield challenges.

This amendment imposes unwarranted and unanticipated obstacles on the career advancement opportunities of women serving in the Army, women who serve by the thousands in Iraq and Afghanistan today.

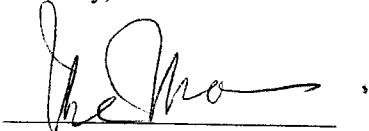
This amendment undercuts our ability to recruit the best and brightest young people for military service.

This amendment undermines the cohesiveness and morale of units by drawing unsupported gender distinctions on deployment of trained personnel.

Finally this amendment came to us literally in the middle of the night with no opportunity for meaningful discussion or debate, no opportunity for consultation with military experts on the drafting or implications of the reversal of our long-standing policy, and no comment from the administration on the practical effects of this abrupt change to our commanders currently in the field. Most importantly, the American people have had no opportunity to weigh in on these important issues.

We understand language is being worked on to revise, tweak or massage the language which was adopted. But with less than 24 hours before mark up, how can last minute, unscrutinized changes be a good way of doing business? Obviously, we have not been given the opportunity to see the revised language, if there is revised language. It may also have fatal flaws. We recommend that this amendment be struck from the bill, and that the committee schedule hearings and deliberation on this issue so that we can have a full national discussion to determine if there is demonstrable need for any adjustment to policy.

Sincerely,



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